JOURNAL OF SPANISH CULTURAL STUDIES
2018, VOL. 19, NO. 3, 281–296
https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2018.1493892

Theater reminiscences: the politics of memory after the expulsion of the Moriscos

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how theater reminiscences helped Moriscos to strengthen their sense of community in North Africa after their expulsion from Spain (1609–1614). Moriscos in exile remembered early modern Spanish theater so as to deal with the difficult circumstances of losing their land but also to highlight their sense of identity as distinct from that of other Muslims outside the Iberian Peninsula, who did not have a strong theater tradition. By tracing references to theater in two manuscripts written in Tunisia, *El manuscrito morisco 9653 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid* (Mami 2002. *El manuscrito morisco 9653 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*. Madrid: Fundación Ramón Menéndez Pidal.) and *Tratado de los dos caminos por un morisco refugiado en Túnez* (Galmés de Fuentes 2005. *Tratado de los dos caminos por un morisco refugiado en Túnez*. Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Instituto Universitario Seminario Menéndez Pidal.), through the lens of memory studies, instances of remembering are viewed as a strategy for Moriscos to celebrate their past but also to recognize their hybrid status in their new lands. I use Jan Assman's definition of communicative memory as the theoretical framework of this essay and take into consideration the element of space in classical treatises on memory.

KEYWORDS

Moriscos; Tunisia; theater; exile; Lope de Vega

Testimonies of Moriscos after the expulsion oscillate between resentment and nostalgia toward their past in Spain. After leaving the Peninsula during the period of 1609 to 1614, the descendants of Muslims forced to convert to Christianity at the end of the fifteenth century had to integrate and immerse themselves in Islamic countries that did not share the cultural heritage and social underpinnings familiar to them. In these works, memories allowed them to express their sense of loss but, more importantly, to assert their identity as a distinctive group in the diaspora. In this sense, writing in Spanish, quoting poems of famous authors, and alluding to dramatic works were conscious decisions by Moriscos made to preserve their cultural memory in their liminal position in North Africa. As the complex relationship of Moriscos with theater has been understudied I am interested in exploring how theater reminiscences in places without a strong theater tradition helped Moriscos to strengthen their sense of community. By *theater reminiscences*, I mean stories or testimonials narrating memories of theatrical performances from a distant past. Generally, these recollections carry a sense of loss and a

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yearning for former times. I argue that Moriscos in exile reminisced about early modern Spanish theater as a means to deal with the difficult circumstances of losing their land but also to highlight their sense of identity as distinct from that of other Muslims who were never exposed to theatrical performances on the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, the memory of performances functions as a political statement as it allows the construction of a collective memory in exile. Reminiscences of those performances evoke names, places and concerns related almost exclusively to the expelled Moriscos in contrast to Muslims who had not lived in Spain. They were not merely images or innocent recollections that appear in the mind, but rather a way for the first generation of Moriscos in North Africa to keep their memories of their past in Spain and to deal with the same issues that those performances display (i.e. mistreatment, banishment and displacement).

This article will trace references to theater in two manuscripts written in Tunisia: *El manuscrito morisco 9653 de la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid*, edited by Ridha Mami (Mami 2002), and *Tratado de los dos caminos por un morisco refugiado en Túnez*, Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes's edition of Manuscript MS2 of the Spanish Royal Academy of History (Galmés de Fuentes 2005). I propose to read these references through the lens of memory studies as strategic instances of remembering that allowed Moriscos to celebrate their past but also to recognize their hybrid status in their new lands. I will examine these manuscripts in light of Jan Assman's definition of communicative memory, also taking into consideration the importance of space in classical treatises on memory.[1]

Moriscos in Tunisia: a communicative memory

Since philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs's assertion in his 1925 *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* that memory depends on socialization, studies focusing on how societies remember, forget, and interpret their past have proliferated. The wide range of areas of study that form part of memory studies – political science, architecture, law, sociology, communications, business, neuroscience, anthropology and literature – has demonstrated that individual memories do not exist in isolation. In order to elaborate on Halbwachs's notion of collective memory, Jan Assman proposes the term *communicative memory*:

> Communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations. (2008, 111)

Assman's definition may help us better understand the Spanish-language writings of expelled Moriscos in Tunisia, who could not be Muslims in Spain and could not be Spaniards in North Africa. Since Moriscos embodied the vestiges of a long struggle against Islam in the Peninsula, they were expelled from Spain. Promoted by the Duke of Lerma, Francisco de Sandoval y Rojas, this political measure had been proposed earlier by the Archbishop and Viceroy of Valencia Juan de Ribera.[2] The decision was not unanimous and, in fact, several noblemen accompanied their Morisco servants to the designated

ports. A process that lasted from 1609 to 1614, the expulsion had serious social and economic consequences. The majority of the expelled Moriscos settled in North Africa, where they had to adapt to a new culture, government and language. Manuscripts from this period reveal the process of integration and the yearning that Moriscos had to endure after their expulsion from Spain at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They emigrated to other European countries, the Maghreb and, in some cases, to Istanbul.

Moriscos who settled in Tunisia maintained strong cohesion as a group. In order to explain this distinct sense of identity in exile, Luis Bernabé Pons has recognized three particular features of this community: the volume and speed of their settlement, their negotiated and planned reception due to the support of a merchant and the sultan and the Ottoman politics of group isolation (2004, 449–450). Although these expelled Moriscos came from different regions in Spain, such as Andalusia, Castile, and Aragon (Penella 1973, 190; Bernabé Pons 2004, 451; Villanueva Zubizarreta 2013, 366), they soon created the perception of a more or less unified group as is reflected in buildings and writings of the period. The testimonial literature of Moriscos in exile can be interpreted as their last cultural production before their integration into Islamic societies, as a new contribution of Muslim culture under difficult circumstances, or as the work of people living between two cultures (Bernabé Pons 2004, 463). The role of memory in these testimonies can shed light on the ways Moriscos made sense of their circumstances as a community.

Assman recognizes that the content of communicative memory presents history in the "frame of autobiographical memory" (2008, 117). Despite their tendency toward anonymous authorship and their focus on religious matters, texts written by expelled Moriscos have a strong autobiographical component. For example, in one long religious poem, Juan Pérez, also known as Ibrahim Taybili, describes in the prologue his experience in a bookstore before the expulsion:

> Acuérdome que el año de mil y y seysçientos y quatro, estando en la feria de Alcalá de Henares, universidad tan nombrada en España, andando paseando un día por la calle mayor, yba a mi lado un amigo de la aparçialidad de los aRiba[3] dichos y últimos en la quenta. Llegamos a una librería, que las ay muy auténticas y copiossas; yo como aficionado, entré en una y pedí los *Çésares* de Pedro Mexía, *Relox de príncipes*, *Epístolas* de Guebara … (as quoted in Bernabé Pons 1988, 153)

This testimony reflects the eagerness of an expelled Morisco to share his personal experiences in Spain and, at the same time, it shows that Moriscos were readers of the literature produced in Spain. To illustrate the consumption of Spanish literature among Moriscos, Álvaro Galmés de Fuentes suggests that aljamiado texts like *El libro de las batallas* were influenced by the Castilian epic (1967, 202) and María Teresa Narváez proposes that the most famous aljamiado author, the Mancebo de Árevalo, uses fragments of Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina* (1995, 264). This consumption is also reflected in the numerous verses from Garcilaso, Lope and Góngora quoted in *El manuscrito morisco 9653*, and especially in *Tratado.* Besides presenting a defense of Islam, this Morisco born in Toledo wants to present himself as a reader and does not hesitate to share details of his life.

Most of these texts are written in Spanish with Roman characters and not the usual aljamiado – Spanish written with Arabic characters – that Moriscos, mainly from Aragon, used in the Peninsula. Several scholars have pointed out that the use of Spanish is one of the most distinctive characteristics of this literature (Penella 1973, 189; Epalza 1988, 3;

Vespertino Rodríguez 1994, 183; Bernabé Pons 2004, 454). As Assman asserts, the medium of communicative memory is the "vernacular language" (2008, 117). In this case, Spanish ceases to be the language imposed by political regulations to become instead the author's preferred mode of communication despite being immersed in an Arabic-speaking country.

Assman also notes that communicative memory "has only a limited time depth which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years" (2008, 111). A version of the *Evangelio de san Bernabé* (Bernabé Pons 1995) was perhaps the last manuscript written by an expelled Morisco in Spanish. Considering that the manuscript dates from the eighteenth century, it seems that Moriscos were fully assimilated into their new culture after a century in North Africa. Finally, Assman argues that the participation of a group in the transmission of communicative memory is diffuse: "Some, it is true, know more, some less, and the memories of the old reach farther back than those of the young. However, there are no specialists of informal, communicative memory" (114). These writers show an evident religious knowledge. Yet, they can hardly be considered specialists presenting an educated view of Spanish history. Some of these writers change topics frequently, interrupt their remembrances to give an opinion or offer only vague details. Just as these recollections are presented in a scattered way, the corpus of literature produced by Moriscos in exile cannot be considered a cohesive and coherent one. Most of these texts lack consistency and continuity.

Remembering Spain was a means for Moriscos to express nostalgia for the land they lost but, more importantly, to assert their identity as Spaniards in Muslim countries. As Paul Connerton puts it, "Thus we may say that our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past and that our images of the past commonly serve to legitimate a present social order" (1989, 3). In this regard, evoking the past helped Moriscos to acknowledge their particular cultural background and differentiate themselves from local inhabitants. In this context, one of the most telling aspects of these memories is how Moriscos remembered theater in a cultural milieu that lacked a tradition of staging plays in the manner they had witnessed in Spain.

The topic of theater in Islamic and Arab countries is a complex one. The general consensus has been that drama in the Arab world linked to the Western tradition was imported with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798, an idea that appeared in Jacob M. Landau's *Studies in the Arab Theatre and Cinema* (1958). In order to provide a more precise picture of the introduction of European theater in Tunis, Khalid Amine and Marvin Carlson demonstrate that this kind of theater was established for the entertainment of the community of Italian immigrants during the nineteenth century (2012, 59). In contrast to this focus on the importation of European theater, recent critics have argued that alternative modes of representation, such as festivals and shadow plays, could be viewed as kinds of theater (Moreh 1992; Allen 2000; Bell 2005; Amine and Carlson 2012). Despite lacking an Arab or Islamic theater heritage in the European sense of theater, Muslims in Al-Andalus were acquainted with various forms of drama from both the East and the West during medieval times. Indeed, Charlotte Stern suggests that those writing Hispano-Arabic poetry could have composed plays similar to the shadow puppet plays of Ibn Daniyal, an Egyptian "playwright" from the thirteenth century (1999, 137), and Maria Kotzmanidou remarks that the first reference to a shadow play was found in Arab Spain (1980, 93). During the early modern period, their descendants were exposed to plays, festivals, and religious celebrations in the Peninsula

until their expulsion. This exposure allowed them to learn the mechanics of staging and, more surprising, to keep the memories of the *corrales* alive during their first decades in North Africa. For Moriscos in exile, attending a live performance like those staged in Spain was extremely difficult or nearly impossible. Figuratively, they could only be spectators of their own drama.

Although more research is needed on the exposure of Muslims to Spanish theater in North Africa during the early modern period, the allusion to the staging of a play in Miguel de Cervantes's *The Bagnios of Algiers* could shed light on this issue. Published in 1615, the play illustrates the vicissitudes of captivity. At the beginning of the third act, several Spanish slaves attend a live performance written by Lope de Rueda (1510–1565). Through the play within a play, Cervantes uses theater as a mode of remembering Spain during imprisonment, portraying it as something that allows slaves to be connected with their land. By including several Muslim characters among the spectators, the author was able refer to some of his own experiences of captivity in order to show that Spanish theater was introduced to Muslims in North Africa by captives. Although the experiences of Spanish captives and expelled Moriscos are radically different, there are similarities in their longing for theater in spaces without a strong tradition of these performances.

In his analysis of the Cervantine play, Javier Irigoyen-García argues that the "staging of profane plays has an identity value for Christian participants, similar to that of the religious festivities, and there are abundant references, both in fiction and nonfiction texts to the performance of *comedias* in Algiers, and about the risks that it entailed" (2011, 53). He offers some testimonials by Spanish captives in North Africa: Fray Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios mentions that Spaniards stage *comedias* in Algiers (46), and Diego Galán describes how some Spaniards planned to stage a play about the conquest of Granada (53). In addition, he includes two examples of fictional texts: Lope de Vega alludes to Spanish captives in Algerian prison rehearsing for a play in *Los cautivos de Argel* and Jerónimo de Alcalá tells the story of some Christian captives in Algiers who decide to stage a play about the Second Rebellion of the Alpujarras in *Alonso, mozo de muchos amos* (53). Here, I would like to argue that the act of remembering performances from Spain could have added to the identity value of the Morisco community in North Africa in the same manner that it did for Spaniards in captivity.

A forbidden play

El manuscrito morisco 9653 is an anonymous commentary on a long religious poem written by a blind Andalusian poet living in Algiers, Ybrahim of Bolfad, during the seventeenth century. In his prologue, the anonymous author states that the purpose of the manuscript is to provide a commentary on Bolfad's poetry to readers who do not possess knowledge of the Arabic language (Mami 2002, 56). The work of an expelled Morisco in Tunisia, the text focuses on the unity of God, the Prophet's miracles, and the issue of death, among other topics. In the manuscript, the author refers to a play that was meant to present one of the miracles of the Prophet, but Inquisitors forbade the performance and tried to punish the playwright.[4] For Moriscos, staging a play could be a dangerous enterprise as it could blur the distinction between religious ritual and theater. As Ynduráin (1986) has pointed out in his study of Aragon, the Inquisition could condemn any performance by New Christians. In this case, praising the miracles of the Prophet could be seen as an

act of religious worship. Throughout the manuscript, the author includes poems to illustrate Islamic precepts to the Morisco audience in exile. In one of these poems, he invites readers to praise Allah as he does with his writing:

> Alahu aqbar (= *Dios es grande*), grandeça
> que ningún juyçio alcança,
> loémosle con pureça,
> creyendo en él con firmeça,
> qu-es solo sin comparança,
> no hay otro Dios sino Alah.
> Y luego os declarará
> mi pluma con gran presteça
> el gran balor y grandeça,
> que dentro del pecho está,
> pues que en él tanto floreçe,
> que da su fruto a la gloria,
> acá y allá resplandece,
> quien de hurdinario tubiesse
> lo que contiene en memoria. (82)

According to him, the act of writing the manuscript can be seen as a way to share what is stored in memory. Interestingly, in discussing Muhammad's miracle of the splitting of the moon, the author seems to be remembering an attempt by a Spanish poet to stage a play in Spain before the expulsion of the Moriscos. According to his testimony, the anecdote was taken from both Arabic and Spanish sources. In the play, the Prophet Muhammed appears dressed in a green and starry garment – to show how the moon was split in two halves, depicted as emerging from his sleeves – before the Inquisition decided to arrest both the playwright and the actors:

> … de adonde sacó el poeta español antes de nuestra espulssión la comedia de los milagros de nuestro ssanto profeta, la qual se repressentó un día en la corte mostrando en ella la berdad, y figurándolo con su bestidura berde sembrada de estrellas, y cómo se partió la luna y entró por ella y salió cada media por su manga. (263)

Although the author does not provide the title of the play or the name of the playwright, he gives a clear description of the costume used by the actor who plays Muhammad. The emphasis on the color and design of the garb functions as a visual aid for constructing the memory of a play that can no longer be staged. However, he decides to allude to theater in order to defend Muhammad's miracle of the splitting of the moon. This connection is not a mere coincidence. Both the theatergoer and the witness to a miracle are spectators of impressive displays that suspend reality, and thus, theater can be one of the best means to reenact a supernatural occurrence. The passage also reveals how Moriscos adapted literary forms to their own circumstances inside and outside the Iberian Peninsula since, as has been mentioned, they were avid readers of literature produced in Spain.

The Morisco author could have quoted other sources at his disposal. Besides verses of the Quran (54.1–2), manuscripts either in aljamiado or Spanish tell the story of the splitting of the moon, such as Manuscript RAH T18 from the Real Academia de la Historia in Spain (López Morillas 1994, 93–96). But the anonymous writer chose to explain the miracle through the memory of a forbidden play, or we might say that it is the discussion of

one of the Prophet's miracles from the Quran that activates the memory of theater. Surprisingly, the Morisco author moves from one of the most important tenets of Islam to one of the most characteristic national literary genres of early modern Spain. Although the split moon has been connected to the Day of the Judgement, I would like to suggest that the popularity of this miracle in writings of Moriscos in the diaspora has to do with a sense of split identity. They had to constantly negotiate how to be faithful Muslims with a strong Spanish cultural heritage. With their past in Spain and their present in North Africa, Moriscos had to deal with irreconcilable expectations of public appearances and private behavior. Most of them had two names, two languages and two cultural backgrounds. The splitting of the moon resonates as a metaphor for the division they had to endure on a daily basis.

Furthermore, the passage goes beyond its doctrinal purpose in order to attack the Inquisition. For instance, after explaining how the play about the miracles of Muhammad was staged, the author states:

> y bisto el tribunal de la ynquiçición donde preside el demonio, y tiene por conssejeros el engaño y ceguedad, este declarar a los tristes ynoçentes la verdad, estándola representando otro día con grande atención y gusto de los creyentes, ynbiaron por los comediantes y el poeta, a los unos les vedaron el haçella, y al otro quissieron castigar. (263)

Accusations against this institution were common among Morisco authors after the expulsion, who were not afraid to depict it as producing the most vile memory of their past in Spain. The poetry of Mohamed Rabadan, edited by H. E. J. Stanley, speaks of the fear and anxiety provoked by this religious tribunal: "La Ynquisición desplegada / con grandes fuerzas y apremios / hacienda con gran rigor / cruezas y desafueros / que casi por todas partes / hacía temblar el suelo" (386). Whereas Moriscos' writings before the expulsion are more ambiguous in their accusations, those after the expulsion are more direct. In exile, they could write more openly without fear of being accused by Inquisitors. As they were newcomers, alluding to these accusations also helped them to present themselves as having been devoted Muslims in the Peninsula, so they might generate compassion and ask for the support of others. Therefore, recalling how theater was regulated by the Inquisition was a political strategy that allowed Moriscos not only to delve into their past but also to look to the future without giving the appearance of identifying too strongly with their time in Spain, so they might avoiding persecution in their new lands. In an introductory essay to the edited version of *Tratado*, Luce López-Baralt observes that the author loves Tunis and is grateful for the welcome provided by the religious leader Çiti Bulgaiz and of Uzmán Dey, but resents that the natives made Moriscos feel like foreigners and made their settlement difficult (2005, 55). In this case, attacking the way the Inquisition regulated theater was a way not only to look back but also to look forward in new lands. It was a way of preventing future persecution and, indirectly, a recognition of the role of theater in spreading the beliefs of Islam.

Theater as memory

Theater reminiscences are more complex in *Tratado*. This doctrinal treatise seeks to provide spiritual guidance on diverse Islamic practices and beliefs, such as those surrounding marriage and death and the pillars of Islam, to the community of Moriscos in Tunisia.

Once again, readers have an opportunity to educate themselves in theological matters without knowledge of Arabic. Developing an allegory of two journeys, a difficult one and a pleasurable one, the manuscript attempts to encourage believers to follow the arduous path of practicing Islam. In his description of the pleasurable journey, the anonymous author includes a *novella* (exemplary novel) and allusions to poems by Spanish authors. In this short novel, the narrator describes his experience in a *corral de comedias*:

> Bide un patio muy grande, adonde, en sillas y bancos, se sentaban los hombres y las mujeres, en un sitio [51v] alto las hurdinarias, y luego muchos balcones adonde estaban los grabes con sus mujeres, y en este patio un tablado adonde todos miraban. (252)

If the passage offers a notion of the spatial configuration of the Spanish theater during the period, it is also telling of the sense of urgency the Morisco author felt to share these lost spaces with new generations. He does not use the word *corral* – a term known to most Moriscos in exile – but rather emphasizes a description of the space. This refusal to label the described space acknowledges that the descendants of Moriscos might not understand the reference to a *corral* and, sadly, will not have the experience of seeing one. It is interesting to note that the author presents himself as an outsider – a spectator of spectators – emphasizing what is seen. By projecting himself as an outsider, he indirectly stresses the fact that he can no longer be part of theatrical performances.

It is not coincidental that the author starts with this description. Classical treatises on memory during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance privileged location in employing mnemonic techniques. At the beginning of *Art of Memory*, Yates (1974) discusses how classical works, such as Cicero's *De oratore*, the anonymously authored *Ad C. Herennium libri IV* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* propose that one must recall the details of a place or a building before imprinting its image in memory.[5] To form a memory, one should start by paying attention to a building, developing a sense of its space and decoration. Therefore, it makes sense that the author of the manuscript describes a *corral* before sharing his memories of plays staged before the expulsion. Besides helping members of the community to have an idea of the building, the description creates the conditions that facilitate a more lasting reminiscence of the Spanish theater.

Since theater and memory are interconnected, I find this description particularly suggestive. The concept of theater has often been used as a metaphor for memory, as in Giulio Camillo's memory theater and Robert Fludd's theater memory system. In his *L'idea del theatro* (1550), the Italian philosopher Giulio Camillo attempts to create a system for memorizing important universal concepts using the design of a wooden theater. In seven grades or steps, spectators can retrieve a great deal of knowledge. As Yates puts it, "The Theatre is a system of memory places, though a 'high and incomparable' placing; it performs the office of a classical memory system for orators by 'conserving for us the things, words, and arts which we confide to it'" (1974, 144). In *Ars memoriae* (1619), Robert Fludd uses the architectural design of a theater to describe memory. Yates relates Fludd's theater to the second Globe Theatre in London (349). In the case of *Tratado*, one can hardly associate the description with one *corral* in particular as the depiction is not specific enough. In both memory systems, theater functions as a repository of knowledge from the past. If the representations of theater proposed by Camillo and Fludd are symbolic and hermetic, the version offered in the manuscript is an uncomplicated one and closer to those offered by classical sources on memory.

After the description of the *corral*, the narrator offers a summary of the plot of Lope de Vega's play *Las mudanzas de fortuna y sucesos de don Beltrán de Aragón*. Although the text was published in 1612, it was probably written between 1604 and 1608. From the Morisco author's testimony, one can conclude that the play was staged a few years before the expulsion. Despite the fact that the author misremembers the title as *La rueda de la fortuna*,[6] his ability to recall passages and paraphrase some of the dialogue is impressive, suggesting that the memory of this play was still fresh in his mind. He begins his recollection by identifying the topic and, then, narrating the plot:

> … representar la comedia de "La Rueda de la Fortuna", que significa los estados del mundo y cómo se truecan. Y para que se conozca, y las cizañas y trayçiones que en él
>
> ay, y el tormento y inquietud –con que aun los que están en alto estado padeçen–, y el engañoso bibir con que biben, contaré el çuçeso por parecerme es a propósito d'este camino.
>
> Y es que un rey casó con sigunda mujer en quien tubo tres hixos, y de la primera uno, a quien por costumbre, como mayor, era el que abía de ser rey después de su padre, y la ynbidia de la madrasta [52 v] –que diçen que el nombre le basta–, que siempre andaba encontrada con el príncipe, y los dos en grandes disenciones … (254)

The author of *Tratado* summarizes the plot and reproduces some of its dialogue in two pages. He does not quote the play verbatim; therefore, the possibility that he had a script at hand can be ruled out. In fact, the central role of orality in sharing values and stories among members of the community may offer an explanation for the unusual skill of remembering entire passages.

This skilled act of remembering can be compared to the memory of Román Ramírez.[7] Also a Morisco, Ramírez was arrested by the Inquisition in 1595 and accused of making a pact with the devil, having a flying horse and memorizing chivalric books. During his Inquisitorial interrogation, he was forced to confess his mnemonics technique: he was able to memorize the order of a book's chapters and the main subject of each one in such a way that his listeners would not notice the changes he made to passages during his narrations. These recitations were, as Leonard Patrick Harvey puts it, "improvised narrations of known stories in a known style, but not in a fixed form" (1974, 283). In the same manner, the Morisco author was capable of summarizing the main plot points of Lope de Vega's play. It is possible that he had in mind listeners who would be able to recognize the story but would not notice the changes he made in telling it. The degree of resemblance to the original text is such that it is tempting to suggest that the author might be an actor remembering parts of the script he had to memorize decades before. Although it is almost impossible to draw that conclusion with certainty, it is clear that he was an avid theatergoer.

Las mudanzas de fortuna y sucesos de don Beltrán de Aragón stages the power struggle between the sons of the King of Aragon, Alfonso IV, and the misfortunes of his counselor after losing the heir's favor. The plot of this drama is appealing not because of the tension over inheriting the throne but because of the allusion to the reversal of fortune of the main character, don Beltrán. In her introduction to *Tratado*, López-Baralt contends that the Morisco author uses the Spanish playwright as a spokesperson for his own existential angst (2005, 153). Indeed, one of the misfortunes of the character is his banishment from the Kingdom of Aragon. The majority of the expelled Moriscos who settled in

Tunisia came from this region. Thus, it is possible that the lost kingdom in the play is a reference to the forbidden land of Moriscos in exile. Moreover, the focus on malicious rumors as the cause of don Beltrán's banishment from the kingdom could be read as a critique of the king's decision to expel Moriscos due to bad advice from his counselors.

After spending several pages summarizing *Las mudanzas de fortuna y sucesos de don Beltrán de Aragón*, the anonymous Morisco quotes from Lope de Vega's *El animal de Hungría*. Written between 1608 and 1612 and published in 1617a, the play tells the story of Teodosia, who lives in a cave after her husband, the King of Hungary, banishes her from the kingdom and marries her sister, Faustina. In order to avenge her sister, she kidnaps the heiress, Rosaura, and raises her among beasts.

As in the case of the previous play, this text focuses on royal court intrigues and how they create misfortunes for people who must live as outsiders. Yet the former queen is not the only one who has been expelled from her home. A child, Felipe, has been taken out of Spain to avoid his death at the hands of his own grandfather, the Count of Barcelona. The desperation of finding oneself in a new land and the desire to return to one's native land likely resonated with Moriscos' own circumstances. However, what caught the author's attention was Rosaura's soliloquy. In the scene, this savage woman is taken prisoner at the palace for trying to free her imprisoned lover, the now adult Felipe, who was accused of killing a villain who in turn was attacking Rosaura. Unlike her lover, Rosaura is able to see the palace firsthand and does not hesitate to share with him the memories of what she witnessed at the royal court. In a long passage, she lists her recollections both real and fanciful of lives, kings, a flood, hell, the Day of Judgment, riches, flattery, glass stairs and ungracious men, among other things:

> De su grandeça me abisa:
> bi pasar vidas apriesa,
> siendo tan corto el espacio;
> bi reyes, supremo ofiçio
> de la justiçia y gobierno;
> bi el dilubio y el infierno
> y bi el día del juicio;
> el dilubio en pretendientes … (Galmés de Fuentes 2005, 264–265)

The main character's visual memory reveals that Rosaura's reminiscences have more to do with the moral meaning she ascribed to her experience than with what she really observed. As in the case of Román Ramírez's confession, Rosaura's report offers an important lesson to readers of testimonies of Moriscos in exile: they should not expect accuracy in recollections of the past because what matters is the impression created by the experience.

Although a poem is more easily remembered than products of other literary genres due to its rhythm and rhyme, it is remarkable how perfectly the author quotes the entire passage of Rosaura's memory. The soliloquy contains almost forty verses. It is possible that he had a *pliego de cordel* and copied the scene. There is evidence of the complex relationship between chapbooks and theater. In his online catalogue *Literatura de cordel y teatro en España (1675–1825)*, Cortés Hernández (2008) has compiled several examples of scenes of *El animal de Hungría* from different periods. In fact, playwright Lope de Vega often complained about the practice of memorizing plays and selling them to the

public (Case 1978, 21). The possibility of the circulation of chapbooks among Moriscos in exile could offer an explanation for their tendency to quote several poems in their religious and pedagogical treatises. In any case, copying the soliloquy is a way of preserving the cultural memory of Spain through a text that focuses precisely on things now absent that someone remembers.

The anonymous author then summarizes the plot of Lope de Vega's *La serrana de la Vera*, written between 1595 and 1598 and published in 1617b. Based on a popular legend, the play tells the story of Leonarda, a lady from Plasencia who decides to live in the mountains after her brother forbids her to see her lover Carlos and attempts to marry her to another man. In nature, she turns into a savage creature dressed as male and gains a reputation as a man killer:

> Bide la zizaña andar lista y bide que, abiendo tratado un casamiento con una hermosa muxer y estando muy adelante el efetuallo, abía otro que la pretendía, perdido de amor por ella; y para deshaçello bino a su hermano d'ella (Galmés de Fuentes 2005, 269).

The anonymous Morisco shows, as Jaime Oliver Asín suggests, that he was a fan of Lope de Vega: "Nuestro morisco había sido, pues, un admirador de Lope de Vega, a quien, sin duda por escrúpulos religiosos, llamó siempre 'el poeta', sin mencionar jamás su nombre como tampoco el de ningún literato cristiano" (1933, 419).

Just as with *El animal de Hungría*, the play is concerned with intrigues among the nobility and women living at the margins of society. Besides the central theme of being an outsider, others topics can help readers understand why this play occupies a place in the Morisco author's memory. First, there is an allusion to Aragon. The man who has been plotting against Carlos, Fulgencio, shares his intention to take Leonarda there. Given that the majority of the expelled Moriscos in Tunisia came from this part of Spain, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Aragon had come to be imagined as a utopian land. In this regard, the play is related to *Las mudanzas de fortuna*. Second, the selection of Plasencia is important because of its relation to the expulsion of the Moriscos: there was strong opposition to the expulsion there and several noblemen from the town defended the Moriscos (Martinez 2009; Sánchez Rubio, Testón Núñez, and Hernández Bermejo 2010). At the beginning of the play, Plasencia is not an ideal place for Leonarda, but, at the end, it represents the return to order and civilization. Historically, the town might figure in the memory of expelled Moriscos who wanted to share a story with future generations of a place where their ancestors had supporters.

Finally, Leonarda's refusal to settle in a single place resonates with the uncomfortable settlement of Moriscos in Tunisia. In several manuscripts, there are testimonies of the welcome provided by the religious leader Çiti Bulgaiz (Epalza 1999–2000) but also of the abuses perpetrated by some of the inhabitants against the earliest newcomers. The uncertainty of their position in the new lands caused Moriscos to travel from one place to another before reaching a final destination. These displacements may explain how a text written in Tunisia, such as *El manuscrito morisco 9653*, comes to deal with a poem written by a blind Andalusian poet living in Algiers. In *La serrana de la Vera*, this wandering is recognized as a trait of Arab people when Fulgencio asks Carlos if he can remember the last place he had seen Leonarda: "Eso la memoria intenta / mas como en tantos asiste / en ninguno se aposenta. / Es un alarbe en la vida" (De Vega, 1617, 260v). Might it be possible that the Morisco remembered this verse even if he did not include it in his summary? In

any case, the lines of Lope de Vega's play draw attention to the importance of staying in one place in order to improve one's memory, as the classical mnemonics treatises recommend.

In his analysis of *El animal de Hungría*, Harry Vélez-Quiñones posits that Lope's wild women and men arise as a result of a violent displacement of guilt, shame and disgust stemming from heinous acts committed by others. Their wildness is a material sign of someone else's monstrous deeds (2002, 44–45). In this regard, the play is similar not only to *La serrana de la Vera* but to *Las mudanzas de fortuna* as well. The plots of these three texts focus on how false accusations end in the banishment of characters from the royal court, and it is tempting to read them as a denunciation of the expulsion. Thus, *wild* does not refer to the change in location and appearance of characters removed from civilization but rather describes those who have conspired against them.

By recalling Spanish theater, the author of *Tratado* is positioned at the same crossroads as the author of *El manuscrito morisco 9653*. In both cases, the memories of Moriscos helped them to deal with nostalgia and resentment toward their past in Spain during the first years of their settlement in North Africa. In his book *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, Fred Davis argues that the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties and that these states pose the threat of identity discontinuity (1979, 34). This nostalgia is stronger in *Tratado*, where theater is evoked as a memory of lost spaces and cultural spectacles. In effect, the plots of the plays are so embedded in the mind of the Morisco author that they can easily be associated with his own circumstances and particularly with the desire to return home. As Davis also reminds us, nostalgic feeling is hardly ever infused with those sentiments we commonly think of as negative (14). Because they felt nostalgia for their lost homeland of Spain, therefore they expressed negative feelings towards the religious persecution perpetrated by the Inquisition that forced them to leave. Interestingly, the author offers some details to give us an idea of the theme of the play but does not summarize the plot at length or quote its dialogue. In a sense, remembering allows the author to criticize the Inquisition, but he chooses not to dwell on this memory. Since the disruption to the play about the miracles of Muhammed can be interpreted as a symbol of the interruption of the Moriscos' past life in Spain, it is hardly surprising that the memory is accompanied by resentment. In both manuscripts, the reminiscences are as ambiguous as Moriscos' own identity: Muslims by faith, but culturally Spaniards (Penella 1973, 189).

Conclusions

I would like to reiterate that remembering theater was a strategy for Moriscos to connect with their past in Spain but also to stress their identity in North Africa. However, theater reminiscences are not exclusive to these communities. In his *Relación de la vida del capitán Domingo del Toral y Valdés* (Serrano y Sanz 1905), Domingo del Toral y Valdés writes about his encounter with a Jew in Aleppo during his travels (1629–1634). According to him, the Jew was familiar with the poetry of Luis de Góngora and the works of Lope de Vega: "Había vivido en Madrid; era muy entendido, muy dado á humanidad, así de historias como de poesía; tenia muchos libros de comedias de Lope de Vega" (Serrano y Sanz 1905, 543).[8] In the case of Moriscos in North Africa, the act of recalling plays staged in

Spain before the expulsion allowed them to revisit those twisted plots that flourished during a period of racial exclusion and religious intolerance. In this sense, theater reminiscences were one of the most cherished possessions that Moriscos carried with them to North Africa. These memories invite us to reflect on the use of theater in exile and to consider the possibility of Moriscos staging plays during the first years of settlement in North Africa. Unfortunately, evidence of this practice has not emerged to date and more research needs to be done to discover whether they did indeed stage their own plays after they departed from Spain.

Notes

1. Jan Assman is a German Egyptologist. He is known for his theories on cultural and communicative memory. In particular, his work can be placed in the interdisciplinary field of memory studies.
2. The bibliography on the expulsion is huge. Manuel Lomas Cortés's *El proceso de expulsión de los moriscos de España (1604–1614)* (2011) addresses the expulsion from the political, administrative and logistical point of view and also explains the process by region. More recently, Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wiegers have edited a series of essays dealing with different aspects of the expulsion, entitled *Los moriscos: Expulsión y diáspora; Una perspectiva internacional* (2013). For the role of Juan de Ribera, see Ehlers (2006) and Márquez Villanueva (1991). On the historiography of the Moriscos, see García-Arenal (1975); Harvey (2005); Bunes Ibarra (1983; and Domínguez Ortiz and Vincent (1978).
3. In the introduction to the text, Bernabé Pons highlights the regular use of the strange grapheme *R*. The grapheme /r/ is a voiced sound, whether in an initial or intervocalic position. The grapheme was common in the Middle Ages and illustrates the conservatism of the Spanish language used by Moriscos in Tunisia (1988, 79).
4. It is possible that the performance in question is a play falsely attributed to Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, *Vida y muerte del falso Profeta Mahoma* (1642). Solà-Solé and Solà-Solé (1972) and Mami (2010) argue that this play was written by an anonymous Morisco. Based on Inquisitorial records, Agustín de la Granja (2006) proposes that the author was Antonio Mira de Amescua. The identification of the playwright as a *poeta español* is noteworthy. On the one hand, it could support the argument that the play was written by Mira de Amescua. On the other, the use of *español* reminds us of the sentiment of nationalism of some expelled Moriscos, who considered themselves Spaniards.
5. For more information about memory during the medieval and early modern period, see Carruthers (2008) and Bouza (2004).
6. It is possible that the play was staged or popularly known as *La rueda de la fortuna*. It is also possible that the author confuses the title due to the fact that Antonio Mira de Amescua wrote a play entitled *La rueda de la fortuna* before 1604.
7. The popular story of this Morisco has received critical attention for being the inspiration for Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's play *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* at the beginning of the seventeenth century. For studies of the case of Román Ramírez, see González Palencia (1929, 1930); Harvey (1974); Hegyi (1982); Caro Baroja (1990); Díaz Migoyo (2004); Magnier Heney (1995); and Díez Fernández and Aguirre de Cárcer (1992). The following critics have studied the case in relation to Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*: Johnson (1993, 1997); Fernández Rodríguez (2007); Ortiz (2014); and González García (2005).
8. The *Relación* was published in the *Colección de documentos inéditos para la historia de España* (1879) and, more recently, has been edited by Gerardo González de la Vega (2016). Theater reminiscences in Sephardic communities deserve more extensive study as similar accounts can be found in Europe. See Boer (1988); Nider (2011); and Álvarez and Félix (1994).

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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